



Executive Summary

Tribal governments and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS or the Department) share the goal of eliminating the health disparities of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) and ensuring that their access to critical health and human services is maximized. To achieve this shared goal it is essential that tribes and the Department engage in open, continuous, and meaningful consultation. True consultation leads to information exchange, mutual understanding, and informed decision-making. The importance of consultations with tribal governments was affirmed through a Presidential Memorandum in 1994 and Executive Orders in 1997 and 2000.

Consistent with the President's directive 1994 Memorandum, HHS Secretary Donna E. Shalala issued a policy memorandum in 1997 entitled, "Department Policy on Consultation with American Indian/Alaska Native Tribes and Indian Organizations." With this memorandum, HHS became the first federal department to issue a tribal consultation policy to all its agencies. Since the issuance of the consultation policy, HHS has engaged in regional and national meetings with tribal leaders to discuss health and human services concerns of AI/ANs and budget priorities.

The purpose of this report is fourfold:

- to share the HHS tribal consultation policy, HHS agency consultation plans, and national consultation activities;
- to document national health and human services concerns and recommendations that were identified by tribal leaders at the five regional Listening Councils and the National Tribal Consultation Forum;
- to identify actions that HHS has taken and proposes to take to address issues that were identified by tribal leaders at the five regional Listening Councils and National Tribal Consultation Forum; and
- to establish a marker for future conversations and accountability.

Accordingly, this report provides background on HHS consultation activities over the past eight years and how these efforts have evolved into the Department's present relationship and consultations with tribal governments. A brief summary is provided on the six regional health forums that were held in 1995 and their relationship to the

succeeding five regional Listening Council meetings in 1998-1999 and the National Tribal Consultation Forum in 2000, HHS commitments to tribal leaders and accomplishments.

The first chapter, *Developing a Meaningful Tribal Consultation Policy*, describes consultation efforts to date and the directives that have guided and will guide Departmental consultation activities. The HHS Consultation plans are in Appendix 3.

Chapter Two, *Listening Councils*, provides information about the regional Listening Councils held in Arizona, North Dakota, Washington, Oklahoma, and New York during 1998 and 1999. Deputy Secretary Kevin Thurm participated in these meetings with Indian Health Service Director, Dr. Michael Trujillo, and approximately 250 representatives of tribal governments and other Indian organizations, including urban Indian health providers.

The major themes and national issues, as well as the local or regional issues, which emerged at the regional Listening Councils are described. Fifty-two (52) distinct issues were identified and divided into seven major themes: Funding and Budget Issues; Services and Service Provision; Care Providers; Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies; Intergovernmental Relations and Related Issues; Infrastructure; and Data and Research.

Chapter Three, *National Tribal Consultation Forum*, describes the National Tribal Consultation Forum (NTCF) which the Department hosted in July, 2000 to provide feedback on the issues raised at the regional Listening Councils and to address additional concerns. The feedback to tribes from HHS agencies and dialogue at the NTCF opened the doors to more meaningful discussions.

Chapter Four, *Next Steps*, describes actions that HHS and Tribes (individually and together) should take to maintain the momentum and ensure continuous progress.

This report includes a number of Appendices that provide useful information, including HHS agency consultation plans and a matrix that summarizes the responses from HHS agencies to issues and recommendations raised by tribal and urban Indian leaders at regional and national meetings. Each issue/issue area identifies: public laws or related authorization, proposed action, activities to date, related appropriations information, obstacles, strategies to overcome obstacles, and HHS contacts. Responses from the agencies offer the beginning of the ongoing dialogue between the federal government and tribes regarding overall health and human service issues.